

**ANNUAL REPORT  
TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD  
TRAILS, GREENWAYS, BYWAYS AND RURAL ECONOMY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**2017/2018**

## INTRODUCTION

September of 2018 marks the first anniversary of the creation of Springfield's Trails, Greenways, Byways, and Rural Economy Advisory Committee. It is appropriate that the Committee make a report to the Springfield Selectboard and the Springfield Planning Commission of its activities during the year. At the organization meeting of the Committee, George T. McNaughton, Randy Gray, and Charles Gregory were elected Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary respectively. George T. McNaughton, accepted the Chair position with the stipulation that he only have to serve as such for one year. New officers are to be elected at the September meeting. The Committee viewed the vast scope of its potential field of inquiry and decided to select five areas of primary focus for the year. The following were selected:

- After organizing itself, the Committee would proceed to gather together all, or as many of the various studies of pedestrian, bicycle or other pathways or sidewalks which have been made, but not yet constructed.
- Emanating out from the spinal trail system that runs north/south through Springfield, determine where there are voids in the access such as a gap in the trail or a lack of sidewalks, and then analyze how the gap could be remedied. This is expanded to include review of potential major trail developments outside of the spinal trail on the ridges and their potential for a trail system beyond that of the spinal trail connections, and also identify potential undeveloped walkways.
- Develop a scouting system to locate grants pertaining to trails, greenways, byways, and rural enterprises which could serve as Springfield destinations, and a grant team trained to react quickly to grant opportunities.
- Develop a checklist of rural economic, educational or cultural facilities or enterprises which would enhance the middle-class appeal, increase the Grand List, tie in with themes or developments in the developed portion of town or otherwise improve the aesthetics and quality of life in the Springfield community, including meeting with the local real estate agents as a group to determine ways that rural areas of Springfield could be enhanced in order to increase real estate values and the marketability of the community.
- Work on how to organize and fund trail maintenance, curb invasive species, and develop monitoring to avoid or reduce *trail abuse or illegal activities*.

No priority was established as among the five priorities selected. Charles Gregory was selected as the point person for the first listed priority consisting of gathering together the various studies. Randy Gray was selected as the point person for the second listed priority.

## **GATHERING THE STUDIES**

The Committee continues to discover nearly forgotten studies and maps regarding the trail system, however, a list of the same was compiled by Charles Gregory and digital copies were supplied to the Town Manager's Office. A non-exhaustive list is as follow:

One of the significant results of this gathering was the discovery of a Phase II plan for extension of the Toonerville Trail up what is now known as Mineral Street. As a result of the discovery of this study and plan, the Committee started an in-depth look at the potential of developing Mineral Street as a parkway. This study in turn led to the discovery of a pre-existing trail running from Mineral Street to the Park Street School property. This trail was then mapped using a GPS device and copies submitted to the Town, Planning Commission and SRDC.

## **VOIDS AND GAPS**

As part of the studying of maps and trails, of particular concern was the linkage of the trails running from the new Muckross State Park to the Hartness Park trails. This trail has been mapped, and a gap located. After obtaining permission from the Town Manager, contact has been made with the owner who has preliminarily agreed to formalizing an agreement to provide the linking of the accesses. At the other end of the trail, discussion is being had with the landowners as to allowing public access on the Hartness trail, and the Committee is discussing the need for certain restrictions and conditions. The intent is to link as many trails in Town as possible to make a true network of trails. Talks have been ongoing with regards to Springweather linking the Toonerville Trail. The Committee is attempting to inventory the trails and is exploring educating the public as to trail existence.

## **GRANTS**

The Committee has recruited a grant writer, however, concern developed as to pursuing certain grants that the Committee not distract from several important projects currently in motion by the Town. The Committee in particular has decided to wait a grant cycle on the Mineral Street Project as they gather additional information, and watch closely the development of Park Street School project.

## **RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Committee has reviewed several potential rural economic development concepts, some of which are beyond the ability of the Committee to effect immediate change. One of those is the current development of hemp as a new or restored product for the area. While hemp is believe to be a product with widespread local and national market. Because of the existing Federal laws, it is unlikely to become a significant asset locally or to the State until such time as there is a change in the Federal law. Inquiries were sent out to the Governor, State Representatives, and our Federal Delegation. The response at the State level was that the State of Vermont had gone as far as it possibly could legally do to the Federal law. Senator Bernard Sanders responded that

two bills have been introduced at the Federal level which would clear the way for the development of hemp as a more normal agricultural crop. At present hemp can be grown in Vermont but it is strictly limited as to what it can be grown for and requires a permit, as a result its usefulness as an economically viable agricultural crop in Vermont is minimal.

### **TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND FUNDING**

The Committee has been requested to develop a trail maintenance and funding plan. It met with a representative of Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, at the suggestion of the Chair of the Selectboard, and with other Town officials. It plans to take up the discussion and drafting of such a Plan at its August meeting with the goal of having such a Plan is draft form for reporting to the Selectboard in November. The intent is to have the Plan adopted by the Selectboard and appropriate funding put in place.

### **FULFILLING CONSULTING RESPONSIBILITIES**

Part of the purpose of the Committee was to act as a lay consulting body to serve the Selectboard and the Planning Commission. In fulfilling this duty, the Committee has investigated and reported on the following, in addition to items mentioned above.

- **Neighborhood Association.** The Committee has requested input from the various neighborhood associations about projects that they would consider important. This input was compiled into a report to the Committee, but the Committee has not used it as the basis of a report to either Planning Commission or the Selectboard at this point.
- **Basin Plan.** The Committee reviewed the proposed 2018 Tactical Basin Plan which was being proposed by the Agency of Natural Resources. The Committee as a result formally submitted suggested changes in the form of comments to the same. These proposed changes were noted and then summarily dismissed. As a result the Committee reported the same to the Springfield Planning Commission, and recommended against any inclusion or positive reference to the plan being included within the Town Plan or any of its implementing regulations.
- **Buffer Zones.** The Committee was contacted by the Chairman of the Planning Commission with regards to new zoning and subdivision regulations being considered by the Planning Commission. The Committee submitted an extract of all of the important trail regulations within the Town Plan which dealt primarily with trails within River and Wetland buffer zones. The Committee also submitted draft regulatory changes regarding the same. These were substantially approved by the Planning Commission for incorporation in the new regulations.
- **Definition Regarding Clear Cutting.** The Committee was asked by the Planning Commission to inquire into local practices and concerns regarding certain logging definitions contained within the regulations. As a result inquiries were sent out to a group of professional foresters who work in the area, and responses were received from

all of them. The comments of the foresters were gathered, compiled, and forwarded to the Planning Commission along with cautionary comments and recommendations.

- **Wall Street Report.** In the process of gathering maps and studies, the attention of the Committee was brought to a map of walking routes compiled by Blue Cross/Blue Shield. This map included a route along Wall Street that had unsafe sidewalks, and street pavement which was questionable for safe pedestrian traffic. The Committee advised the Selectboard of the map and the route in question.
- **Park Criteria.** In working with the Mineral Street Parkway project it became apparent that it would be useful to the Town, Planning Commission, and the Committee if the Town had developed a set of criteria which would apply to any determination of whether a site would be suitable to some form of park, pocket park, rest area, etc. As a result the Committee so advised the Planning Commission of that fact and recommended that the Commission develop such a set of criteria.
- **Tree Inventory.** The Committee has discussed the Springfield Urban Tree inventory at several meetings, and has yet to determine whether it should issue a recommendation in that regard.
- **Sidewalks Blocked by Vehicles.** The Committee has received a large number of photographs of parked cars blocking sidewalks. The Committee Chair has advised the Town Manager as to one of these which appeared to be a vehicle which had remained in the same position for several months, and the matter was investigated and acted upon. The Committee has not yet decided whether to issue a formal report.
- **Downtown Streetscape.** The Committee has further advised the Selectboard, Planning Commission, and Springfield on the Move that it supports the efforts being made to improve the walkability of Springfield via the Downtown Streetscape Plan as it develops.

Approved by the Springfield Trails, Greenways, Byways, and Rural Economy Advisory Committee as of September 25, 2018.

George T. McNaughton, Chair  
Randy Gray, Vice Chair  
Charles Gregory, Secretary  
Bettina McCrady, Member  
Hallie Whitcomb, Member